

MCC Committee on Women's Concerns report



Report #47 January-February 1983

Focus on Nurturing Children: Feminist Roots—What Nurtures Their Growth?

This *Report* is about childhood and past childhood. It is written *by* former children *to* all of us who are part of the greater family of God, and who thus share responsibility for children.

The issue does not contain advice on how to nurture, but rather memories and insights about nurturing based on each author's experience. First, a graduate student, a physical therapist, a social worker, and a college professor tell about the events and people in their childhood that influenced them as Christian women and feminists. Then a father and mother share issues of fatherhood and day care that are a part of their family experience. Next, a mother shares an open letter to her teenage son.

And finally, a child psychologist describes the playfulness of children's role experimentation and the imaginative energy that such flexibility could release for adults.

It is my wish that the articles in this *Report* will add new meaning to the word "nurture" for all readers.—*Karen Neufeld, professor at Tabor College and compiler of features for this Report.*

In Retrospect #1

by Janice Wiebe Ollenburger

She had been a pioneer woman, traveling across the prairie in a covered wagon and living in a sod house. She told stories of those frontier days, of raising children, baking rugabroat, and hunting for chicken eggs in the grass. She had no career; she had done nothing monumental by today's standards.

Yet, none of that was important. Ben's grandma had touched many lives, mine only briefly. She was remembered for all the special things she had done for people, for the many stories she told, and for her smile. *Who she was* was more important than whether or not she had a career.

I had heard that last line since I was young, but I had forgotten it in my quest to be a "successful" woman,

bent on having a career and being liberated. I had dismissed it as something you tell girls but not boys in our society.

Grandma's death brought my quest into perspective. I began thinking of others who had been influential in shaping me. I realized that what was important was not what they did for a living, but who they were as people and how they encouraged me to grow.

For example, though my mom is a registered nurse and teacher, I remember her encouragement to begin a personal journal more than I remember her status as a professional. She encouraged me to be comfortable with a woman's body; she taught me in a casual, balanced way to understand my body and to be confident with it.

I know that dad helped many people as a social worker, but I remember especially the time he spent helping me learn how to draw. After months of seeing only horses on my paper, he gave me a "How to Draw Animals" book and some new pencils. Soon he got to help draw elephants and deer.

There were others who spent time encouraging me. In that nurturing, they gave me the self-confidence I needed and the freedom to not be locked into strict male/female roles.

Early in grade school, my great-aunt Gretchen was an important encourager. I had begun taking piano lessons and with them came the chance to play piano specials during Sunday night church. I knew Aunt Gretchen heard mistakes as I played, but she made me excited to try again and confident that I was improving. I can still remember her hug after church.

Another influential person was my seventh grade Sunday school teacher. I remember being impressed with her honesty with us "kids". Never before had an adult shared some of her questions and problems with us.

She encouraged us all, through her example, to be honest and willing to ask questions even about God.

She and I shared a special poetry notebook together. We wrote poems to share with each other and we found poems that were meaningful to give to each other.

In high school, two of our youth sponsors were particularly instrumental in creating my interest in leading our church youth group. Their confidence in my ability was appreciated as we worked together to plan Bible studies and social events.

Later, during college, I began to know another great-aunt who was especially influential in shaping my understanding of women as confident and articulate people. Her encouragement came through her warm friendship and her example as a strong capable single woman who is well-traveled and comfortable in many settings. She continues to be an important model for me; an encouragement to be aware of the global world around me, to be warmly hospitable, and to speak confidently with men and women.

Many others come to mind, but it was probably through these especially that I felt confident that I could do whatever I decided I wanted to do. It was in their nurturing of my talents and sensitivities that I now feel the freedom to explore career options and lifestyle-changing roles.

I realize that what is most important, however, is who I am and how I touch the lives around me.

Janice Wiebe Ollenburger is a graduate student in art at Trenton State College in New Jersey.

In Retrospect #2

by Jo Ellen Wahl Born

Male and female roles were clearly defined within our large farming family. The men "worked in the fields" and the women "worked in the house."

A younger brother had apparently assimilated this when at five years of age he proudly proclaimed at the supper table, "Mom is the boss of the in-house and dad is the boss of the out-house." His statement was seen as an amusing play on words, yet presented many subtle connotations about female/male roles.

My parents verbally reinforced traditional female and male roles to their nine children, yet they themselves demonstrated a willingness and capability to freely cross these very boundaries. It was their individual personalities and lifestyles which had the greatest effect in molding my views of female/male roles.

During my early childhood, dad was usually away from home during the week, establishing a farm from prairie land some 30 miles away. Mom was left with the responsibility of raising nine children. In addition to her duties as mother she also was our primary disciplinarian, guardian and role model during those years.

Most strikingly, she established herself as a spiritual leader both in our home and in the surrounding community. She was a tireless Bible scholar and

teacher, yet positions of church leadership were restricted exclusively to men. While I was growing up, the significance of this paradox was not apparent to me.

Several years ago, when my family was together, I challenged a statement that my husband had made. An older sister admonished me, "You need to be submissive to your husband."

As we discussed her statement, I began to realize the inconsistencies both within my family and in the church between the verbalized male/female role boundaries and the actuality of what has been practiced. Women were and are instructing children, both boys and girls, and developing their spiritual framework. I began to wonder why it had always been assumed that males eventually surpassed females in wisdom and knowledge both spiritual and otherwise.

Throughout my childhood I was encouraged to be inquisitive. We were instructed to question and search for scriptural truth and not accept blindly what other presented to us as truth. This instruction and the observations I made regarding my parents' actual roles influenced my view that men and women are created equal and should respect each other as equals within the church as well as within our societal structure.

Jo Ellen Wahl Born is a physical therapist at the Kansas City Medical Center in Kansas City, Missouri.

In Retrospect #3

by Mary Classen Born

I was born on the World Day of Prayer in 1956. While father fervently prayed with other "brethren" in a local church, mother suffered through labor and delivery alone. What more was he to do in those days of sterilized, cold delivery rooms and anesthetized mothers? If one could not be directly involved, he could at least pray.

Now, 26 years later, I identify with those women who were "mother-raised" in their infancy and whose fathers became more primary during maturation.

However, because of my mother's neurological illness known as Huntington's Disease—the symptoms of which began to show only shortly after my birth—my father was to play an increasingly dominant role in my life.

I knew mother best as a pastor's wife and homemaker. People were drawn to her on her own merits and not merely because she was "Reverend" Classen's wife. She was a tall and physically strong woman and her personality was equally generous.

I am told by my father that mother was an assertive and competent leader among young people in her home church, and I have heard him extoll the virtues of responsibility and common sense that she possessed. I am sad that I never really knew the assertive woman father married, due to her declining health. But I did know a woman who was secure as an advisor and confidant to dad, and whose insights were central to family discussion and decision-making.

My parents would agree that dad was "head of the house". But the flexibility with which headship was dispersed rendered that term less than authoritative. Influenced earlier by mother's ability to draw out and encourage discussion, my family spent much time in decision-making and sharing around the supper table.

As we children got older and mom's verbal abilities decreased, my father turned to us, particularly his daughters, for intellectual conversation and sharing of personal and professional struggles. We were made to feel that our input was not only important but vital. Indeed, as mom's condition worsened, my sister took on the task of mother and female role model to me.

This adolescent leadership was not limited just to home chores. It included close work with our father in the church—from entertaining guests in the home to youth group organization.

In many instances, my older sister Naomi and I intervened when mother could no longer fill the expected role to maintain a "normal" family life. And we were greatly rewarded for our efforts by our father's approval and encouragement. He saw us as *equal* partners.

So in the process of attempting to maintain the "normal" family life under difficult circumstances, we possibly created the extraordinary.

Recently I asked dad what differences he saw between parenting boys and girls. He said, "The girls never needed spanking—they were sensitive enough to respond to an intimidating look." Perhaps I was destined to be who I am because my parents adhered to the traditional view of girls as naturally sensitive and boys as less so. (This view, I realize, did not make my brother Phil any less sensitive!).

I also quickly learned, perhaps due to my mother's increased passivity, to look to father for affirmation. I noticed that men whom I respected were most pleased by women who were verbally quick (and, more importantly, who were willing to listen to men talk). Influenced by my father's view of women and observing my sister, I came to see women as articulate and competent organizers who by their suggestions were able to be reconcilers both at home and at church.

Although I am grateful for the view of male and female roles gained at home, I have hard questions to ask myself. I wonder: how can I be open to the significant experiences of other women if I have been conditioned to respond primarily to *male* affirmations of myself? Looking to other women for role models has not been a natural thing but rather a conscious effort.

I often wish I could talk with my mother about egalitarian marriage and women's leadership in the church. But she will never be able to tell me, and so it is with my father that I carry on this discussion. It is to him that I send, as a daughter would to her mother, subscriptions to *MCC Women's Report* and *Daughters of Sarah*. (Perhaps I have helped shape my father into the feminist my mother never had opportunity to become. . .).

Because I've lost many of the memories of growing up with mother, I've had to rely on male recollections of her—my father's—to retrieve a glimpse of her influence on me. My images of ideal men and women have become enmeshed because one parent took on the role and expression of two.

Yet at the same time, I now consciously search for strong women to emulate. Maybe one reason is that some part of me still yearns to experience that female parent.

Mary Classen Born is a social worker who has recently moved to the New York area from Chicago.

In Retrospect #4

by Charlotte Kroeker

During my childhood, my rural Mennonite family operated on rather traditional role models. My mother was a homemaker, busy raising four children and providing help for my father on the farm. The distinction in responsibilities was clear; if it was farm-related, the responsibility for decision-making was my father's. Anything having to do with the house or yard was my mother's domain.

My father was an ambitious farmer, so while my mother often helped him, he rarely took time to help in the house. As children, we worked outside before and after school and in the summers. In our teen years, differences in roles began to appear for my brother and three of us girls. My brother worked exclusively outside while we girls did a combination of inside and outside work.

At the end of the summer my brother's check was always larger than ours. None of us ever had to do without things we needed or experiences we wanted to have, but we did get a clear message—working outside was more important than working inside. Homemaking did not have monetary value, so it was not as important.

I envied my brother—he had money and the decision-making power that went with it. He was doing "important" things while I was hoeing the garden, making meals to take to the field, and worst of all, cleaning his room and making his bed!

The role models I sought were in church and school settings. A wonderful minister, some teachers and a camp counsellor were people I admired. They encouraged me to develop the things I did well. My mother was also helpful in answering questions about roles. She had a career before marriage and understood my interest in a profession.

Now, years later, I have a marriage and a career, both of which are important in my fully functioning as an adult. The variety of roles I observed in childhood allowed me to choose satisfying roles for myself as an adult, even though they are different from those of my parents.

Several observations arise from my experience:

1) *The ability to accomplish basic life-maintenance activities is important for both men and women.*

Household activities provide a balance to life. For those of us who make a living by thinking, the physical activity can be a welcome diversion. Also, a well-vacuumed room provides a sense of finality. Rarely do we encounter such clear-cut feelings of "the job is done" in a professional workday.

We now recognize the necessity for women to have a profession, for economic or personal reasons. We don't talk as often about the man who has difficulty coping not only with the loss of a companion, but also with not knowing how to cook, clean or run the washing machine. A blending of roles for men and women at homes means each is more self-sufficient.

2) *Decision-making should not be relegated to the person contributing the most monetarily to a relationship.* When both men and women participate in the process, a better decision is made. The interaction may

Feminism and Fatherhood

by Randall Basinger

As I sat, changing my son's diaper, the feelings of self-pity and resentment were difficult to suppress. What was a Ph.D. in philosophy of religion doing spending so many hours "mothering" a small child? Was it for *this* that I had spent untold hours and thousands of dollars preparing? I couldn't help but feel I deserved better.

It was during times like these, when due to my wife's studies and career the burden of childcare fell on my shoulders, that the "feminist" ideas which had gradually worked their way into our marriage seemed most suspect. All the idealistic, egalitarian talk about *shared* housework, *shared* childcare and *equal* access to careers was beginning to lose much of its original appeal. It had all sounded so good before the birth of our son; now its reality was beginning to sink in.

In a word, I felt trapped; I wanted my basic freedoms. I wanted the freedom to sleep the whole night through; to watch ball games; to read the newspaper without interruption; to go *where* I wanted to go *when* I wanted to go. Most of all I wanted the freedom to study and thereby advance my professional standing. My new job of babysitting was clearly infringing on these freedoms. It's hard to sit back and watch one's freedoms dwindle away.

Maybe my wife and I had gone too far. Perhaps we had bought too far into the model of the family proposed by the secular women's liberation movement. Perhaps in the long run our newly embraced feminist model of the family would prove to be detrimental to our son. Perhaps I am not really psychologically equipped for "mothering." Perhaps my wife is really not suited for a career outside the home and would be more content and fulfilled in a more traditional role. Perhaps for the good of all concerned we should reexamine our present family arrangement and purge it of feminist influences. Perhaps. . . perhaps. . . perhaps. . .

As these thoughts crossed my mind, the arguments against the feminist movement, which I had so easily

take time, but the relationship is stronger for the effort. Openness, honesty and creative problem-solving continue to operate after the decision is made. The people involved have a sense of ownership about the decision.

3) *Our churches need to be involved in discerning the gifts of our members, the needs around us, and how our gifts can fill these needs.* We will want to look honestly and non-judgmentally at who we are in order to be able to listen to who God would have us to be. This involves recognizing our limitations as well as our gifts—we cannot understand what we do not do well.

My own home church gave me opportunities to serve and supported me through the times I failed. Their example of caring needs to exist throughout a child's growing years and also into adulthood.

Charlotte Kroeker is a faculty member in the music department at Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas.

ridiculed before the birth of my son, suddenly began sounding very appealing and increasingly plausible. Maybe we had abandoned the traditional model too quickly; maybe we had simply been caught up in a passing cultural fad. My hopes soared as I anticipated the possibility of justifying and hence re-embracing the traditional model.

However, my conscience would not leave these last thoughts unchallenged. The more I reflected the more obvious it became that what I was really seeking was not a justification but a rationalization. What I wanted was a model of the family that would satisfy my personal desires and whose relation to fact or sound reasoning was at best secondary.

Upon this realization, those ideas that had originally caused me to question the more traditional views of the family came back to mind. Their simplicity was almost startling. They centered around two basic moral concepts: fairness and love.

Why did I, a male, deserve or have the right to any more freedoms than my wife? Why should I resent the opportunities my wife desires when they are in fact identical to those I desire? Why should life be arranged in such a way as to favor me rather than my wife? The simple concept of fairness still gave me the same answers to these questions. As a Christian I could do no less than (to paraphrase Jesus's command) "do unto my wife as I would have her do unto me." As a male, I had no more rights or freedoms than my wife. It was clear what fairness demands; there must be no ethical double standard between the sexes.

This was reaffirmed as I reflected again on the concept of love. Husbands are taught in Scripture to love their wives. But what does love mean if it does not mean willing what is good for the other? My wife is a unique creation of God with her own unique talents and potentials. Consequently my role as a *loving* husband must be to help in any way possible to provide a family environment where these talents and potentials can be maximized. Anything less would fall short of the self-giving, sacrificial love modeled by Jesus himself.

These reflections on the concepts of fairness and love reinforced in my mind the choices my wife and I had previously made. Why then was I, a Ph.D. in philosophy of religion, sitting here changing my son's diaper? The answer was now clear. It was my *moral obligation*; it was, given our unique family situation, where I *ought* to be. With these thoughts settled, I was able to resume my designated task of babysitter with a new momentum fired by the fuel of moral conviction.

However, a new thought began emerging. Sure I had forfeited some freedoms when I came to recognize and honor the rights of my wife. Yet it started becoming clear to me that this wasn't the end of the matter but only the beginning. There was something that had thus far totally escaped my recognition. The loss of freedom in one area of my life had in fact given me free access to much more. I was given the freedom to develop a relationship with my son. I was free to a much greater extent to learn to know him. I was much more free to share in and hopefully help shape his development. I was free to hear the "Daddy, Daddy!!" when he was in need of help. The opportunities to develop skills once confined to "the mother" were now also opened to me.

Reflections of a Hard-Core Day Care Family

by Rebekah Blrch Basinger

A few weeks ago, a friend referred to us as a "hard-core" day care family. After we had finished laughing about all the possible meanings of her statement, I began to think about how our attitude toward day care centers has changed in the past six years.

When I was pregnant with our first child, my husband and I assumed our family life would be fairly traditional. Although Randy wanted to be an active participant in parenting, we thought he would still be the primary wage-earner and I would be the primary caregiver.

It was an exciting time for us. Randy was just completing his Ph.D. and had signed a contract with Tabor College. We were ready to begin our "real" life.

But it didn't take long for us to realize that life isn't always the way it is depicted in TV commercials. I found that, after working for six years, I was not happy spending all my time at home with an infant. I needed the stimulation of adult company and the challenge of a job. Also, we soon discovered that Randy's paycheck, which we had looked forward to for so long, wasn't enough to cover all our expenses.

So when Adam was just a year old, I signed a contract with Tabor. The child care search was on.

We were aware that there was a day care center in Hillsboro, but at first it wasn't even an option. Both of us had grown up hearing very negative statements about day care centers. They were "unfamily". Children were neglected in such places. Only "bad" parents send their children to a day care center.

Fortunately we met some parents who were sending their children to Hillsboro's day care center. They spoke

I was discovering within myself talents and potentials I never suspected; I was free to know myself. A radically new and challenging area of personal and "professional" development was opening up before me. In short, I was experiencing an increased freedom to become a parent.

I had already come to accept my "babysitting" as an obligation or duty that flowed from my commitment to love and be fair to my wife. I was now, however, moving beyond the level of obligation, duty, principle and law to the level of opportunity and privilege. I began approaching that point where our duties become privileges and our obligations become our freely chosen desires. My confrontation with feminism had in fact not turned me into a babysitter, but rather was turning me into a father.

Randall Basinger teaches Bible and philosophy at Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas. The above is reprinted with permission from The Christian Leader, June 17, 1980. A companion statement on day care by the author's spouse is printed below.

highly of the dedicated staff and the well-run program. And they stressed the dependability of a day care center over a private babysitter. All of this appealed to us.

I went to visit Happy Face Day Care Center and spoke with the director. I met the toddler's teacher and observed her with the children. We talked about their philosophy of early childhood education, about discipline, and about working with parents on such things as toilet training. I was very impressed with all that I saw and heard.

Adam began his day care experience at 13 months. Four years later, he attends Happy Face in the afternoons after morning at kindergarten.

Even though we are pleased with the care and training Adam has received at Happy Face, some of the old doubts and fears about institutionalized child care linger. If he is naughty in public, I worry that people will say it is because of day care rather than because he is an energetic little boy. When he sasses or uses bad language, I wonder if I shouldn't have him at home with me, sheltering him from bad influences.

And I sometimes wonder if in the future Adam will tell us we spoiled his childhood by sending him to a day care center. Then I have to remind myself that we can't second guess the future. We have to live with our decisions and make them positive.

One of the ways we have chosen to make Adam's day care experience a good one is to be actively involved in the center. I have served on the board of directors for three years; two as president. I write news stories about the center for the local newspaper. I prepare ads, design brochures, and represent the center at civic organizations.

I discuss the nursery school curriculum with the staff and applaud their attempts to avoid sexism, racism,

violence and excess materialism in their lessons. And I have even knocked on doors asking for money for the center.

Randy is the unofficial maintenance man for the center. He has repaired leaking plumbing, thawed frozen pipes, remodeled an old bathroom, repaired playground equipment and painted badly scarred walls. Right now he is looking for time to winterize the building.

It's not always easy for us to find time for the day care center, but we feel we must. And Adam's pride in our involvement with *his* Happy Face makes it worth it.

Open Letter to a Teenage Son

by Rose F. Buschman

Dear Son,

Karen has asked me to write a letter about what I have taught you about women. When I asked you about it, you said, "Nothing." Really, now! You have been getting lessons from me about women for as long as you can remember, even though you may not have realized it.

I have been a working mother most of your life, and so you have lived in a world of babysitters, a day care center, and a nursery school. Since you started school, I have been able to arrange my teaching schedule so that I am usually home when you get home and have most of my vacations when you have yours.

You know me not only as your mother, but also as a teacher, former college professor, wife, Sunday school teacher and church treasurer. You have observed me as I try to fulfill these various roles to the best of my ability. You also know that I am a Christian, committed to doing the Lord's will in my life.

Your father and I have what I call a partnership marriage. We make our decisions together and often include you in the process as well. Some decisions your dad makes because he knows more about the subject than I do, and some I make for the same reasons. You have observed us discussing the "whys, ifs and whats" of a problem and then coming to a joint agreement.

In this area, your dad and I practice what I call mutual submission. We are sensitive to each other's needs and feelings and try not to make decisions that will hurt the other.

Right now you are getting a good demonstration of what it means for a husband and wife to support each other in their work. Your father's new job as Sunday school superintendent and mine as church treasurer require a lot of "listening and mutual understanding."

In our family your dad and I have shared responsibilities determined by our interests and abilities rather than by what the traditional pattern for men and women has been. I like to cook and do the bills and your dad doesn't. Mowing the lawn is something I don't like to do, so your dad did that until you were old enough to take over that chore. This winter all three of us have agreed to share more equally in the housekeeping

I realize that a day care center may not be the answer for everyone, but for our family, it has been invaluable. Because we know that Adam is well cared for, both of us can devote ourselves wholeheartedly to our careers during the working day. Then in the evenings, we devote our time to our family.

Adam's time at Happy Face is almost over. But our involvement with the center will continue. Our second child, Jay, was born in August, and we are counting the months until he too will be a Happy Face child.

Rebekah Birch Bastinger is director of information services at Tabor College.

chores. I'm glad to see that you are keeping up your part of the bargain.

I remember how worried you were when, as a four-year-old, you realized that I would be going away for a week of meetings. You were so worried about who would do the cooking. I explained to you that daddy would fix the meals and asked you to help.

I had a good laugh when you told me the next evening on the phone, "Mommy, we took these packages out of the freezer and you know what? The recipe is right on the back," I'm glad you and daddy like TV dinners.

Remember how you and I learned to change a flat tire on our car one dark night on the Kansas prairie? Nobody would stop and help us, so we did it together. You knew how to operate the jack, and I had more strength to loosen the lug nuts and lift the tire.

I can remember you saying, "Imagine, we didn't need daddy to help us." Son, it sure would have been nice to have had him around, but you and I learned something about resourcefulness that night!

I'll never forget the day you came home from fourth grade and told me, "Boys are smarter than girls." I know you don't believe that anymore, but that afternoon nothing I said would change your mind. I've tried to teach you that "smartness" and "ability" are not determined by sex, but are the result of the gifts given to us by God.

Because I teach math, you come to me when you need help with your math homework. When you have a question about "nature" you ask your dad, the scientist. Together, all three of us are learning the language of computers and computer programming.

You really surprised me recently when you told me that you wanted me to be your special assistant when you became president of the United States. You said that I was usually right and that I had a lot more experience than you, so you wanted my help. Well, I don't know if I want to be the mother of the president or even an adviser to one, but I sure appreciate your vote of confidence.

Actually, your dad and I have tried to teach you that all of us (men and women) have our strengths and weaknesses. We are all made in the image of God and are equal in the kingdom of God.

I couldn't finish this letter without talking about what I have taught you about my sexuality. Actually, you

have learned this in the context of my marriage. You know that daddy and I love each other very much; you have seen us hug and kiss and I'm sure you know we are lovers. Son, your dad and I are each other's best friend, and I hope that someday, if you should marry, you will experience a similar relationship with your wife.

You and I have had some interesting conversations about sex differences, puberty, babies, etc. Remember when we were driving in heavy rush hour traffic and you had to know where babies come from? Later, that book about being "almost twelve" was fascinating, wasn't it? I guess it had to be or you would not have skipped "Dukes of Hazzard" to read it.

I'm still wondering what you thought about that "live birth" we both watched recently on TV. I'll wait until you let me know that you want to talk about it—then we'll share our feelings. I'm sure as you get older there will be other questions about girls; lots of them. I trust you will

have the confidence in me to continue to share your questions and comments with me.

Son, you need to realize that my life has been very different from that of my mother and grandmother. I have had to find new ways of combining a career and a family and of adjusting to the many different roles I must function in. Your father and I have given you an example of a Christian marriage which allows for these differences.

I trust that we have provided you with examples which will help you as you develop your own relationships with other people—and especially, someday, with your wife.

Love, Mother

Rose F. Buschman is a math teacher in Garden City, Kansas.

Learning from Children's Play

by Diane Brandt

Living with young children is an exercise in hope. A new child makes it possible to believe in new beginnings: relocating the center of things. In the passionate and sometimes painful interchange between parents and children, the impulse to educate, train and impose meets with the recognition of innocence—the kind of wholeness we remember as the shape of own real selves. How can children find their place in the world without letting go of their own truth?

In a world that conforms to our vision of how things should be, growing up might be no more than this: finding one's place. My own parents patterned their child rearing on this model—obedience and a proper recognition of authority and of "the way things are" were indications of a successful upbringing.

However, insofar as the intense, burning vitality of childhood represents a return to the true nature of things—a "starting over"—the values of education and nurture must be measured against what children already know. Much energy is spent in our society on designing curriculae, techniques and environments to effectively *teach* the young. Much more difficult is the effort to observe and understand children and their unique, unfragmented world.

The world mirrored in the eyes of children is the world as it might have been. It is impossible to gaze at its reflection without the admission of failure—a falling away.

The honest nurture of children must therefore involve less "teaching" and more sustaining, protecting, and giving. Keeping alive the fierce fire of self-knowledge in children—this is the task of parents who wish to prepare their sons and daughters to live in a fragmented world which has lost its center—so that they may not lose themselves in it but help to make it whole again. . . .

In play, children "try on" different attitudes, social perspectives, roles. The ease with which they assume these, for a moment or for hours, suggests their fictional quality. For instance, my six-year-old daughter can see herself as a doctor, mother, medieval princess, artist, and child who needs comforting in quick succession, without losing her sense of who she is. Each is an assumed context of action with certain inherent qualities, but with enormous potential for imaginative release.

Children show their awareness of the artificiality of social roles by exaggerating the external gestures associated with them: the doctor imposes every imaginable discomfort on her patients; the medieval princess needs more finery than any person could conceivably desire.

What is "real" in children's play is the imaginative energy which transforms these poses into vivid, infinitely suggestive intimations of a world which for adults no longer exists except in dreams. Adults tend to invert this vision by assigning an objective reality to social roles, which has the effect of strangling the spirit within.

Feminism has helped to point out the fictional quality of social roles by isolating their external characteristics. The logical outcome of such recognition would be not a mere reshuffling of roles, but a much greater flexibility in social identification generally.

As a mother of young children, I find myself faced with absurd, impossible choices: to "stay home" or "go to work"—ie., to pursue private and personal or public and social activity; to develop my own intellectual interests or support the interests of my family.

Having glimpsed the wholeness of children's lives, in which activity means experimenting with a variety of contexts but being defined by none of them, I can only hope that the greater flexibility in work opportunities for women can include the kind of playfulness which

would assign roles their proper importance—as a context which contains and releases imaginative energy rather than defining what people are.

Diane Brandt, from Winnipeg, Manitoba, is currently conducting research toward a book on the nurture of children.

Resources

Creating Family, film series by Clayton Barbeau. Five films, 50 min. each, available from: Franciscan Communications, 1229 S. Santee St., Los Angeles, CA., 90015. 213-746-2916. Rental: \$295 the set.

Clayton Barbeau is a Catholic family therapist and lecturer who raised four of his eight children as a single parent after his wife's death. His five films are entitled: 1) *The Husband-Wife Relationship*, 2) *Creating Family*, 3) *The Male-Female Crisis*, 4) *Teens, Singles, and Love vs. Sex*, and 5) *Parents as Role Models*.

Barbeau's thesis is that "to create families open and responsive to the world takes time"—our tendency is to try to rush things. Parents are to be role models not of perfection, but rather of openness and clear communication. He sees persons as decision-makers with a variety of options as to how the available time is to be used.

Part of the male-female crisis, according to Barbeau, relates to the fact that the American male has been taught to withhold feelings.

Barbara Reber speaks of these films as "five of the best hours I have ever spent.... the series includes a few words which will jolt you, but it is excellent."

Life Planning Program, Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries, Box 1245, Elkhart, IN, 46515.

This is a newly-developed mentoring program for teenagers to be used by congregations. It attempts to take seriously the task of the congregation in providing adult role models who will help call out the gifts of youth.

Each high-school-aged youth is paired up with a same-sex "advocate" of his/her choice for a monthly meeting to talk about topics such as self-awareness, relationships, faith development, lifestyle, and career planning.

Cooperating congregations appoint a "life planning coordinator" who administers the program. Grade 9, 10, 11, and 12 manuals are available for youth and advocates to use as discussion guides. Several times a year all the youth and advocates in the congregation meet for a joint event such as a "career fair". For more information, write to Lavon Welty at MBCM.

Sharing and Caring: The Art of Raising Kids in Two-Career Families, Margaret G. White, Prentice-Hall, paperback, 1982.

The author, who works in the field of adult development, covers topics such as: 1) balancing family and career, 2) caring for the child as fathers and mothers, 3) housework, and 4) working out sex roles.

The book draws on interviews with 46 couples in two-career families. Each chapter concludes with a worksheet and a section called "making the commitment."

News and Verbs

Christ! Christ! Christ!, an exhibition of over 50 needlepoint and petitpoint tapestries by **Elizabeth Wenger** of Goshen, Indiana, opened at Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario, on October 24, 1982. The artist spent a week in the area, showing slides of her work to church, ministerial and seminary groups. The artist draws heavily on biblical stories and on medieval Christian images. Viewers remarked on Elizabeth's vibrant colors, strong images, and on her ability to bring new life to old stories by exploring their human emotion. The exhibit continued through November 20, and was organized by **Susan D. Shantz**.

The Peace and Social Concerns Group of the Salford Mennonite Church, Salford, Pa., invited women from the Eastern District (GC) and the Franconia Conference (MC) to a meeting on October 3, 1982 to discuss women's involvement in the 1983 Bethlehem Assembly. (Eastern District and Franconia Conference are the two "host" bodies for the August 1983 joint gathering. The three "affirmations and concerns" summarized here were sent to the Assembly planning committees: 1) Affirmation for involving women on planning committees and for scheduling women as moderators, song

leaders and worship leaders; also for planning workshops dealing with women's issues; 2) A strong suggestion that a woman be engaged as a keynote speaker during joint sessions ("because we believe that women should be involved in the presentations of sermons and Bible study"); and 3) concern for the use of inclusive language in hymns, Scriptures, and prayers.

An international conference entitled **Common Differences: Third World Women and Feminist Perspectives** will be held at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, April 9-12, 1983. A goal is to encourage ongoing dialogue and critique between "third world" and "first world" women. For more information write: Office for Women's Resources and Services, 346 Fred H. Turner Student Services Building, 610 East John Street, Champaign, Ill. 61820.

"Pocket posters" advertising the MCC Committee on Women's Concerns *Report* are available at no cost from the U.S. Peace Section office, Akron. Suggestions for use: churches, college student unions or dorms, MCC thrift shops.

Judy Zimmerman Herr graduated from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in May, 1982 with an M.Div.

degree. She was awarded the Thomas Jamison Scholarship and the Sylvester Marvin Fellowship, in recognition of "having achieved the highest standard in all departments of the seminary curriculum." Judy is now serving as MCC representative for South Africa.

Joyce Hedrick, Lederach, Pa., is serving as pastoral intern at Plains Mennonite Church, Franconia Conference, Lansdale, Pa. The assignment is in conjunction with her studies at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, from which she will graduate with an M.Div. in May, 1983.

Mary E. Burkholder, Kitchener, Ontario, is lecturer in the English Department at Satya Wacana Christian University in Salatiga, Java, Indonesia, and also teaches Theological English part-time at a Mennonite seminary in Pati, Indonesia. Both assignments are with MCC.

Grace Wenger, professor at Lancaster Mennonite High School and Millersville State College, Lancaster, Pa., was featured speaker at the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society's December 6 meeting. Her topic was "Velvet and Steel: Women in Home Mission in Lancaster Conference."

Katherine Yutzy, Goshen, Indiana, began a two-year assignment in August teaching at Graduate Nursing School in Indore, India. She will also assist with curriculum revision and help set up a program for post-basic nursing studies.

Naomi Kauffman, librarian at Perkasio Mennonite Church, was awarded the title of Church Librarian of the Year and the National Convention of the Church and Synagogue Library Association in Albuquerque, New Mexico in June.

Among the thirty or so Mennonites (including three men) attending this year's Evangelical Women's Caucus (July 1982 in Seattle, Washington) were members of the Lancaster Conference Task Force on Women.

Ann Yoder Showalter was licensed to the ministry last June at First Church, Oak Park, Illinois. A recent graduate of Bethany Theological Seminary (M.Div.), she is now in residency in clinical pastoral education in Chicago.

Rose Waltner-Graber was ordained in July at Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Indiana. She and her husband **Dan** were commissioned at the same church to mission work in Recife, Brazil, under the General Conference Mennonite Church.

Women's Missionary and Service Commission of the Mennonite Church has given scholarships to the following people: **Jill Nell**, **Teresa Schumaker**, and **Debra Steiner** at Hesston College; and to **Marcella Hostetler** at Goshen College.

Martha Smith Good, New Hamburg, Ontario, will chair the next meeting of the Committee on Women's Concerns to be held in spring in Kansas. Concerns and/or agenda can be addressed to her at 161 Shade St., New Hamburg, Ontario.

Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus, Harrisonburg, Virginia, is interim pastor at Grace Mennonite Church, Pandora, Ohio.

Pauline Kennel, of Lombard (Illinois) Mennonite Church, is the new coordinator of Chicago Area Mennonites, the position formerly held by David Whitermore.

Women in Mission of the General Conference Mennonite Church commissioned **Cornelia Lehn** to write a collection of mission and service stories. The book will be ready by summer 1983.

Women's Missionary and Service Commission will convene a gathering of several hundred women in Kalona, Iowa, 4-6 March 1983. **Jean Alliman**, Hesston, Kansas, is to be the featured speaker.

Signs is a recommendable quarterly journal of "Women in Culture and Society," University of Chicago Press.

Personhood in Community was celebrated at Eastern Mennonite College 28-30 October. **June Alliman Yoder** and **Shirley Showalter** were key speakers. A series of eight workshops were offered.

Margaret Foth, "Your Time" radio writer and speaker, was interviewed on Guelph, Ontario, radio station CJOY, and was able to give an unexpected plug to the then imminent conference Women in Ministry.

Wieke van der Velden, Dutch cultural anthropologist, is spending eight months in Canada and the U.S. at the invitation of Mennonite Central Committee Peace Section. She is writing articles for the Mennonite press about the European peace movement, and speaking on such subjects as east-west tensions from a European point of view; Women for Peace; movement in Europe; women in India; women in development. Wieke is a graduate of the Free University of Amsterdam, and spent a year in India.

A Mennonite Church/General Conference Mennonite Church celebration of women will take place on Wednesday evening in Stabler Hall, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. It will be part of the week-long gathering of the two groups in July, 1983.

The work of **fifty contributors** is being considered for inclusion in "Women's Response to the Arts," a publication of the Peace Section Committee on Women's Concerns. An editorial committee is made up of **Esther Wiens**, Winnipeg, Manitoba (compiler); **Malinda Nickel**, Hillsboro, Kansas; **Mary Schertz**, Elkhart, Indiana (editor). The book will likely be ready for the printer by mid-1983.

Twenty-two women in Ramganj, Bangladesh, are producing solar dried coconut in amounts of 1,500 pounds each month. They are employed in the Surjosnato Food Products project, initiated by Mennonite Central Committee in June 1980. ("Surjosnato" means "bathed in sunlight.") The project is labor intensive and production is relatively simple. "Marketing personnel have discovered that bakeries, confectionaries, and especially biscuit manufacturers prefer MCC's Sunshine

coconut, says **Allan Sauder**, MCC worker from St. Jacobs, Ontario.

The October 1982 issue of *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* focuses on the life of **Mary Magdalene Good**, missionary-educator in India from 1919-1952. **Elizabeth Bauman**, office editor, writes in the opening comments, "Mary Good's concern for the status of the women and girls of India is readily apparent. No doubt it was with a great deal of satisfaction that the following could be reported in the *Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of 1925*: 'Our Christians are also much more concerned for the education and training of their daughters than are the non-Christian people. They do not want them to become ignorant village women. A non-Christian forest officer who was recently married said to one of our brethren, 'You Christian young men look forward to marrying intelligent, well-educated women but we have to take what we get.'"

Catherine Mumaw, home economics professor at Goshen College, recently completed a year sabbatical which included one month in Jamaica as Consultant to Rural Education Sector Loan Programme for the Government of Jamaica and U.S. AID, and an evaluation of MCC Jamaica program; one month in Poland with the Goshen College Poland Exchange Program; two months as MCC World Hunger Concerns Resource person for Home Economists in North America. The remainder of her time was spent in Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, Guatemala, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Zambia, Upper Volta and Senegal, where she consulted alumni of Maternal/Child Nutrition courses, contacted home economists, gathered information about appropriate technology for women's work, observed MCC programs relating to family life, nutrition, household technology and women's issues, and served in a spiritual support and pastoral role especially to MCC women.

Dorothy Lichty, Worden, Ontario, is the new chair of Conrad Grebel College Board of Convenors.

Elsie Miller, formerly from Smithville, Ohio, was ordained at Oak Grove Mennonite Church where she had been a member of the pastoral staff. She is now serving Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita, Kansas.

Dorothy Gish, chair of the behavioral sciences department and professor of early childhood education, Messiah College, has been named assistant dean, responsible for faculty development. In 1981-82 Gish spent 10 months in 20 countries on behalf of Wycliffe Summer Institute of Linguistics, the Brethren in Christ Church and Mennonite Central Committee. She conducted a study on the sources of stress for missionaries and served as resource person for MCC retreats in Zambia, Bolivia and Brazil. Retreat topics were: "Who Am I and How Do I Communicate," "Coping with Stress," and "Happy Holiness, Holy Happiness."

If you have news and verbs that you would like to share with the other 2,000 readers of *Report*, send them to Sue Clemmer Steiner, Apt. 3, 87 Westmount Rd. North, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 5G5 Canada.

Looking Ahead

Forthcoming *Reports* will focus on:

Women Mystics and Devotional Life, March-April 1983, compiled by Esther Wiens, 77 Henderson Highway, Winnipeg R2L 1L1;

Principles for Hermeneutics, May-June 1983, compiled by Jan Lugibihl, 3003 Benham, Elkhart, Indiana 46514;

Ten-Year Celebration of the Committee on Women's Concerns, July-August 1983, compiled by Margaret Loewen Reimer, *Mennonite Reporter*, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3G6 Canada.

Women and Non-Traditional Churches, September-October 1983, compiled by Janice Kreider, 4090 W 31st Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6S 1Y6 Canada.

The *REPORT* is published bi-monthly by the MCC Committee on Women's Concerns. The committee, formed in 1973, believes that Jesus Christ teaches equality of all persons. It strives to promote this belief through sharing information, concerns and ideas relating to problems and issues which affect the status of women in church and society. Correspondence should be addressed to Editor Sue Clemmer Steiner, Apt. 3, 87 Westmount Rd. North, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 5G5 Canada.

To subscribe or change your address, please send your old address with your new address to: MCC, 21 South 12th Street, Akron, PA 17501. Allow 2-4 weeks for address change. Contributions welcome.

MCC

Mennonite
Central
Committee

21 South 12th Street
Akron
Pennsylvania
U.S.A.
17501

**Address
correction
requested**

